THE BISHOP OF CHESTER's

SERMON

BEFORE

THE HOUSE OF LORDS,

ON MONDAY, JANUARY 31, 1791.

BEING THE ANNIVERSARY OF KING CHARLES's MARTYRDOM.

Die Martis, 1° Februarii, 1791.

ORDERED, by the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, in Parliament aſſembled, That the Thanks of this Houſe, be, and are hereby given to the Lord Biſhop of Cheſter, for the Sermon by him preached, before this Houſe yeſterday, in the Abbey Church, Weſtminſter, and he is hereby deſired to cauſe the ſame to be forthwith printed and publiſhed.

GEORGE ROSE,

Cler. Parliamentor.

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SERMON

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PREACHED BEFORE THE

LORDS SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL,

IN THE

ABBEY CHURCH OF WESTMINSTER,

ON MONDAY, JANUARY 31, 1791.

BEING

THE ANNIVERSARY OF KING CHARLES'S MARTYRDOM,

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BY WILLIAM, LORD BISHOP
OF CHESTER.

OXFORD:
PPINTED FOR JAMES FLETCHER, IN THE TURL;
AND J. RIVINGTON AND SONS, IN ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD, LONDON.
MDCCXCI.

Page 3. l. 12. *for* therefore *read* however

SERMON, &c.

1 PETER, Chap. ii. Ver. 17.

FEAR GOD, HONOUR THE KING.

WHETHER we conſider the nature of man, or the attributes of God, the neceſſities, which oblige us to cultivate ſociety, or the bleſſings, which it yields in aid of our well being, it ſhould ſeem probable, that there may be ſome proviſion in the eſtabliſhed order of things, for the maintenance, and ſupport of that ſubordination, and government, without which ſociety cannot ſubſiſt. But if Reaſon, incompetent to perfect the juſt principles of domeſtic ſubordination,

has been indebted to Revelation for the enforcement of thoſe relative duties, which can alone regulate the conduct of this ſmaller circle, in the attainment of ſocial felicity, we have a ſtrong, preſumptive, argument to hope, that we are not deſtitute of the ſame divine guidance in a matter of ſo much importance to the general happineſs of mankind. Again, if, conſidering God, as a moral governor, and ourſelves, as the objects of his government, we reflect upon the actual ſtate of ſociety, and obſerve, that as none of our affections are without their influence upon our actions, and few comparatively of our actions without their influence upon the happineſs of ſociety, and that they do therefore, ſo far coincide with, or contradict the general deſign of his Providence, it is plainly impoſſible to ſuppoſe, that a revelation, which provides for the adjuſtment of our affections in private life, ſhould not have given them their due direction, and regulated their movements in the extenſive, and intricate operation of civil relations. We will likewiſe add, that as theſe rules of duty cannot be marked out for the direction of the individual, merely as he ſtands related to civil ſociety, but as parts of the moral law, upon the obſervance of which his future happineſs will depend, they muſt be ſo contrived, that, whilſt they ſatisfy the wiſdom of the legiſlator, they may be found within the reach of every common capacity.

It would, therefore, be injuſtice to the deſign of the Apoſtle to ſuppoſe the precepts, above cited, to be a part of a caſual enumeration

enumeration of duties; or, on account of their obvious and trite notoriety, not to merit the deliberate attention of the ſtateſman. Nor is the latter of theſe precepts at all more temporary, or more local, than the former; whilſt the ſame reaſons plainly enforce the reſpect to the magiſtrate, whatever be the ſpecific form of government. Together taken, they hold out a plain truth, which legiſlators in all countries, and at all times, have in practice acknowleged; namely, that religion is the baſis of all ſocial, and political union, which can only be permanently ſupported by the ſanctions of a divine revelation.

It will be, therefore, in vain to expect from the ſcriptures, that they ſhould authoriſe any one mode of government, as of univerſal obligation; and they, who have argued from the condeſcenſion of the Deity, in eſtabliſhing the covenant at Mount Sinai, that kingdoms muſt needs be elective, or from the divine diſpleaſure expreſſed, when the Jews rejected the adminiſtration of God himſelf, to put themſelves into the hands of one, who might go in and out before them to battle, have concluded, that God muſt ever diſapprove the form of Kingly government, have only taken an occaſional advantage of the ignorance of the times, and of a readineſs to apply detached paſſages of Scripture in ſupport of general theories, which they were not intended to enforce; and which were oppoſed with full as great a ſhew of reaſon by thoſe, who maintained, through a ſimilar mode of deduction, that the un-

limited power of the Monarch muſt be moſt analogous to the government of God, as well as moſt ſuited to the deſign of the Apoſtle's precept.

Hence, where religion has maintained its influence with the many, and its views have been underſtood only by the few, it hath been eaſy to divide ſtates, to diſturb the peace of nations, and to ſubvert the very being of government, whilſt each party has miſrepreſented the true deſign of revelation.

How far theſe cauſes contributed, at no great diſtance from the Reformation, to produce that melancholy cataſtrophe, which we lament in the ſolemnity of this day, I do not inquire; not ſo much, becauſe the application of the moſt acknowledged truths, applied to the hiſtory of that unhappy reign, is rarely exempt from the ſuſpicion of party prejudice, as, becauſe it ſeems more uſeful to inſiſt upon the real influence, which religion, rightly underſtood, has in the ſupport of every well-ordered ſociety, than to dwell on the abuſes, and miſapplications of it, which are little likely to be revived in this age, and from which, I think, we have leaſt to apprehend.

But, indeed, had a religion, which claimed to be univerſal, and is deſigned to embrace all the nations of the earth, injoined any ſpecific form of government for the world in general, or directed different forms for the regulation of different ſtates; it is obvious to obſerve, that the mode, or modes ſo

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injoined, muſt have been reſpectively, not only ſo clearly deſcribed, as to leave no reaſonable doubt, but ſo manifeſtly enforced by the immediate interpoſition of the divine legiſlator, as to preclude the moſt reſtleſs, or daring ambition from change, or innovation. Thus would revelation have ſhifted its object, or, at leaſt, have put the temporal happineſs of man too nearly on a level with that of his future exiſtence.

The Goſpel of Chriſt, on the contrary, purſuing, as its ultimate end, the future happineſs of man, through all the varieties of mode, or ſhape, which ſociety can take, promotes the juſt views of each, by enforcing obedience to the ſupreme power, every where, as a duty to God; whilſt it provides for the preſent intereſts of the governed, by teaching the magiſtrate, that, as the ſervant of God, he is reſponſible for the happineſs of thoſe committed to his care: and, on this plain principle, "that all legal authority is derived from above," teaches both, that they will be amenable for their conduct to a tribunal, where rewards, and puniſhments ſhall be diſtributed by the juſtice of an omniſcient, and omnipotent Being.

But it is not only in the ſupport of each government, as it actually ſubſiſts, or in the gradual, and analogous improvements, which the beſt conſtitution may admit, or indeed require, that the benefits of this religion may be diſcerned. Chriſtianity has, in ſome inſtances, laid the foundation of government, and, in others, certainly as often meliorated the

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condition of ſtates, which have owed their uncouth forms to the ſelfwilled power of a military deſpot, or which, projected on plans better calculated for the general intereſt, have yet admitted improvements from the effect of thoſe divine precepts, which, whilſt they forbid injuries, forbid us alſo to return evil for evil. And it may be obſerved, that, at this day, the chart of Chriſtendom, as it ſtands compared with that of the other regions of the globe, is become the chart of legal liberty. The ends of ſociety have been herein better underſtood, and the claim of the individual to the greateſt degree of perſonal indulgence in private, and of cooperation in public concerns, which are compatible with the general good of the whole, is better aſcertained and ſecured; in different ſtates differently indeed; but in all, with an effect to be attributed ſolely to the influence of Chriſtianity, which, if it glance in its pureſt luſtre only on ſome favoured ſpot, diffuſes a general light unknown, before the Sun of Righteouſneſs aroſe in this our hemiſphere.

For, if we complain with too much reaſon, that it has not all the effects upon the opinions, and conduct of individuals, which it might naturally be ſuppoſed to have, yet it is impoſſible not to recogniſe its influence in the laws of every European ſtate; laws, which are all founded, more, or leſs, in the juſtice, purity, and benevolence, ſo much inſiſted upon in the Goſpel, and which are in the ſame proportion, more, or leſs, productive of public happineſs.

But

But the religion of Chriſt, taken in another view, has, in our own country, had a ſingular, and important effect in the ſupport of civil government. The Church of England, raiſed on a foundation laid by the hands of the Apoſtles, exhibits in its preſent form the moſt correct model of primitive purity, whilſt it makes ſo eſſential a part of the general fabric, that it is become the ſupport and ornament of the conſtitution of this kingdom. Whilſt the towering hierarchy of Rome hath excited or aided the ambition of deſpotic power; whilſt a jealouſy of every degree of rank and elevation in ſome of the Proteſtant churches, would reduce all government to a republican form; our own, by an analogy in her formation, has ſtrengthened the ſeveral orders of the ſtate, from which reciprocally ſhe receives a degree of ſecurity, beyond what any other civil government could afford.

What benefits each of theſe hath derived from this union, and how requiſite the maintenance of it was to the ſafety of each, was early diſcoverable in the troubles of that unfortunate Prince, who clearly ſaw, that thoſe, who laboured moſt to diſſolve this union, wiſhed only to ſee the ſeparate extinction of each; a Prince, to whoſe ſteady reſiſtance in this point, and to whoſe fortitude in the ſubſequent ſacrifice of life, we in no ſmall degree owe the preſent enjoyment of our Eccleſiaſtical, and, in the event, the improvement of our Civil Government. For what could be deſtroyed only by a previous ſeparation of its parts, and could be ſeparated only by means ſo violent, was juſtly conſidered, as

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united by more, than a caſual connection. The blow, which diſſolved this union, rebounded with full force upon its authors; and, under the Divine direction, replaced the parts accurately upon the old foundation, to exhibit, in ſtill greater perfection, this edifice of public felicity.

But it will be urged, that the King himſelf contributed a ſhare in producing the calamities, in which he bore ſo large a proportion. If, in the embarraſſments of ſo difficult a ſituation, he was ſometimes imprudent; if, from the biaſs of education, or from the intereſted ſuggeſtions of others, he was at any time induced to conſider the prerogatives of the Crown, then leſs explicitly declared, than they have been ſince, as an indefinite truſt, to which he might juſtly give a more, or leſs extended operation, as his adviſers ſhould judge expedient; to theſe charges we might well oppoſe the known, and avowed reparation, made on his part, of every grievance, real, or pretended. But we are contented, that hiſtory enforce whatever can be uſeful, in point of caution, on the councils of every Prince, whilſt we can felicitate ourſelves upon the confidence of an united nation in one, whoſe exerciſe of the prerogatives of his ſtation, marks a mind habitually impreſſed with a ſtrict regard to their legal, and juſt extent, as well as with a religious ſenſe of the public good.

We are happy too to obſerve, that the loyal attachment of the people to their Sovereign affords reaſon to believe, that the admonition, which it is peculiarly the object of this day's ſolemnity

lemnity to convey, was never leſs neceſſary in the regulation of their conduct, than at preſent. But, in truth, an impatience of ſubjection to the governing powers is an evil ſo interwoven in the very frame of human nature, ſo cheriſhed by falſe apprehenſions of liberty, that, whether it be conſidered in a moral, or political view, no precepts, which religion, no examples, which hiſtory can ſuggeſt, will ever be ſuperfluous. Indeed, in a conſtitution, where the prerogatives of the throne, and the privileges of the people, are ſo nicely balanced, and, where the adminiſtrators of the powers veſted in the Prince are reſponſible for every miſconduct in the executive government, and, ſtill more decidedly, for every encroachment on the eſtabliſhed rights of the governed, the minds of the multitude cannot be rendered too ſenſible of the evils, which this kingdom has experienced from the factious, and intereſted pretenſions of thoſe, who, whilſt they deſtroyed the dignity of the Crown, cruſhed the liberties of the ſubject.

Again, from that conſtitutional competition for public confidence, to which theſe kingdoms, in part, owe the beſt ſervices of rare, and extraordinary talents, it becomes requiſite, that the people at large, with a ſober ſenſe of the concern, which they have in the preſervation of the whole, and of the dangers, to which ſuch ſtruggles may occaſionally expoſe them, ſhould throw their weight on the ſide, which bids faireſt to ſecure their preſent happineſs. Again, to hold up to the eyes of the nation the conſequences of a conteſt, which was ſoon

ſtrengthened by thoſe, who aimed to ſubvert the doctrines and government of our Church, and which ended in the murder of the Sovereign, in the abolition of the regal name and powers, in the deſtruction of the nobility, and of the free election of the third branch of the legiſlature, in the annihilation of the rights of the ſubject, in the temporary loſs of all government, and the ſubſequent tyranny of one, who concentred in himſelf every legiſlative, and executive power, intruſted by our conſtitution ſo wiſely to the ſeparate, and diſtinct functions of its component parts, events, as little in the contemplation of thoſe, who reſiſted the meaſures firſt complained of, as they were foreſeen by thoſe, who adviſed them, is to remind all parties, how much they may become anſwerable for miſchiefs beyond their preſent apprehenſion, when, by the ſmalleſt tranſgreſſion of their reſpective duties, they give an irregular biaſs to the movements of a machine, the ſtructure of which is too complicated, and the ſprings too powerful to be ſuddenly regulated, or controuled by the interpoſition of any human ability.

There are too, in the preſent ſituation of a neighbouring kingdom, circumſtances, which make ſuch repreſentations ſeaſonable to us; for, whilſt the topic chiefly in uſe with thoſe, who moſt approve of the diſſolution of its ancient form of government, reſt on the appeal to thoſe natural rights, which can be ſuppoſed only in a ſtate of unaſſociated exiſtence, we cannot be too much in earneſt to obviate the effects of a

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language, which ſtrikes at the very being of all government, and can be uſeful to thoſe only, who have an intereſt in the ſubverſion of ſubſiſting ſyſtems; but which will be equally inapplicable, when the object ſhall be, as in the end it always muſt be, to rebuild, upon whatever plan, or deſign, it may be expedient to raiſe the political fabric. For, in a ſtate of ſociety, the appeal to theſe rights implies this obvious abſurdity, "that it is poſſible to maintain all the privileges belonging to the individual in a ſtate of nature, conſiſtently with "the benefits of ſociety;" a deception, which ſeldom fails of its influence, and which will doubtleſs be flattering to the hopes of the multitude; but which muſt be contradicted, the moment that it becomes neceſſary to reſume the form of ſociety, to which, under every poſſible ſhape, the reſtraints of ſubordination are eſſential.

The natural equality of mankind is another topic, from which no argument can be drawn, beyond the admonition to the magiſtrate, to remind him, that his preeminence of power, and ſtation, is a truſt holden for the benefit of the governed, and, for the juſt execution of which, he is reſponſible in a moral view. If it be meant, in any degree, as an argument for confounding the different claſſes of men, which reſult from a ſtate of ſociety, or, as a meaſure of the liberties of the people, like the topic already conſidered, it implies a contradiction, and militates againſt every form of government, reſting on a fact falſely aſſumed, that men, in any ſtate of ſociety, can

be ſuppoſed to exiſt without the relation, each to the other, of inferior, or ſuperior.

The great natural right of the individual, if that be, properly ſpeaking, a natural right, which is founded in the very ends and deſign of ſocial, and civil government, and which, as ſuch, is enforced by the dictates of our religion, is, what has been already alluded to, namely, the greateſt degree of perſonal ſecurity, and enjoyment, which is conſiſtent with the greateſt good obtainable for the whole of Society. But it by no means follows, that the individual, or any number of individuals, are at liberty to purſue this claim, of which ſo few can judge in any degree, and of which ſtill fewer will judge temperately, by violent means, and at the hazard of the good actually enjoyed; or, that every degree of enjoyment leſs than that, which would reſult from the moſt perfect government, will juſtify political diſſatisfaction and complaints. On the contrary, conſidering the uncertainty of events, which no human wiſdom can ſecure, the certain detriment, to which all attempts to change ſubject the general happineſs, and the quantity of moral, as well as of natural evil, which is inſeparable from them; it is evidently true, that a due ſenſe of the general good, as well as a religious regard to our moral obligations, will teach us in all caſes to prefer the preſent advantages of a Government, which in any reaſonable degree ſecures the great ends of ſociety, to the hazard of civil commotions.

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With this caution againſt the admiſſion of principles inapplicable to the ſtate of any government, the preſent poſture of Europe affords an uſeful leſſon to us, one, which ſhould awaken a ſentiment of gratitude to Almighty God in the breaſt of every ſubject of theſe dominions; affords a picture of countries ſtruggling in the anxious, and doubtful purſuit of liberties, which, by the bleſſing of God, we have long enjoyed under the protection of the happieſt conſtitution, which the Divine goodneſs ever conceded to the ſucceſſive wiſdom of ages.

What is infinitely more ſtriking is, the diſſolution of a Monarchy ſo diſtinguiſhed by its extent and importance; a Monarchy, the ſubjects of which have been attached to the principles of its government, by the form of its eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment, and by the ſtrong tie, which long habit hath on the minds peculiarly of collective bodies; a diſſolution, the more awful, as it was neither effected by extraneous force, nor retarded by the partial adherence of its conſtituent members; and which therefore furniſhes us with a ſingular, and affecting inſtance of human inſtability, in the humiliating ſpectacle of above twenty millions of people, melted, as it were, into a ſhapeleſs maſs, and waiting, till the overruling hand of Providence ſhall guide, it may be, the virtues, or the vices of an individual, to give them ſuch a form, as ſhall ultimately ſuit the deſigns of his moral government, in the ruin, or protection of their national name and proſperity.

It affords likewiſe another remark worthy of our attention. The Gallican Church, protected by eſtabliſhments coeval with the foundation of this powerful Monarchy, has, for above eight hundred years, ſtrengthened, and ſecured the allegiance of the people to that form of government, with which it was inſeparably united. In the views therefore of thoſe, who had determined upon the deſtruction of that government, it was eſſential to purſue the meaſures, by which, in this country, the Monarchy, and Conſtitution were deprived of their beſt ſupport: and it is probable, that it has been under the operation of this leſſon, that the Church in France was the firſt to feel that ſtrong hand, which has ſince ſtruck at every part of its civil, and eccleſiaſtical conſtitution.

What it is further of importance to us to remark, is, that, if we are enabled, in a comparative view, to oppoſe domeſtic peace to civil diſtractions, increaſing revenues to public neceſſity, a powerful influence in the councils of Europe to a total ſuſpenſion of national importance, in ſhort, almoſt every thing deſirable in poſſeſſion to every thing, which fluctuates in a precarious expectancy; it is not to our merits, but to the Divine mercy, that we owe the private advantages, as well as the public aggrandiſement of our preſent ſituation. And, although there may be in this revolution ſome things unprecedented in the hiſtory of mankind, an attentive obſerver will feel too ſtrong an intereſt in the general reſemblance, which this picture bears to that of the unhappy reign of Charles the

firſt,

firſt, not to add in the pure, and mild ſpirit of our holy religion, to his thankfulneſs to Almighty God for the bleſſings which we now enjoy, his prayers likewiſe to that King of Kings, who, in our own caſe, produced order out of confuſion, that he would, in this inſtance alſo, ſo direct the multifarious, and jarring projects of individuals, that they may conſpire in the means, and facilitate the acquiſition of a political ſyſtem, which ſhall diſpenſe to all the great ends of a well ordered government.

But we muſt not forget, that the objects of this day's ſolemnity are humiliation for our national ſins, which have an obvious tendency to deprive us of the Divine bleſſings; and a cautious circumſpection to provide againſt the influence of thoſe errours, which once compleated the ſum of our national calamities; and theſe objects naturally lead to an attentive inquiry into the meaſures, which the prudence of thoſe, who had moſt ſuffered, and who beſt knew, what cauſes contributed to their ſufferings, ſuggeſted for the future ſafety, and preſervation of a conſtitution, which reached its perfection only after the precarious ſtruggles of above half a century, and was purchaſed by the continual waſte of the deareſt blood, which this country could boaſt.

If we obſerve them to have fortified the conſtitution with peculiar care in any one quarter, it will behove us to maintain theſe works in their utmoſt ſtrength under the conviction, which long experience has given us, of their utility. If theſe

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our Anceſtors have excluded any deſcription of men from places of public truſt, the reaſons, by themſelves aſſigned, are "the prevention of like miſchiefs in time to come, and "the preſervation of the public peace in Church and State."*

Indeed, a late deciſion hath ſhewn, that in the ſentiment of Parliament, and of the Public, to open this gate is at once to ſet aſide the wiſdom of our forefathers, and the benefit of our own experience; and that to admit thoſe to a ſhare in one part of the conſtitution, who avow their hoſtility to the other, is to riſk the ſafety of both: but, if to an avowed enmity to our Church, we add, what is moſt true, principles irreconcilable with the ſupremacy of the ſtate in the externals of religion, the admiſſion of perſons ſo diſpoſed promiſes, with a moral certainty, to diſturb the peace of Church and State; and, if we give credit to the awful leſſon of this day, to deſtroy the exiſtence of both.

But, as arguments in proof of the eſſential connection, which one hath with the other, may, in the preſent moment, be deemed ſuperfluous, I will add only one plain remark from hiſtory, and our perſonal experience.

The violent fate of the unfortunate King deſtroyed both Church and State; the deſign, and effect of the reſtoration of his ſon, was to reſtore both; as the object, and the event of the revolution, was to ſave both, and fix them on a permanent foundation.

* Preamble to the Corporation Act.

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From this date it will be allowed, that the civil, and religious liberties of the individual have been ſecured, and the wealth, and power of the public, have been raiſed in a proportion before unknown, and the peaceful enjoyment of both more evenly eſtabliſhed, and more generally diffuſed, than at any former period.

But, if this topic be thought leſs neceſſary now, there is another in cloſe connection with it, which ſeems to demand the attention of all ranks of life, becauſe the miſchief, I think, has been diſſeminated amongſt all ranks of life by the conſpicuous induſtry of a few, who, weary of making objections to ceremonies in themſelves indifferent, in their uſe expedient, and againſt which the credulity of party can no longer ſupport the charge of any thing ſinful; weary likewiſe of fruitleſs complaints againſt a form of Eccleſiaſtical Government, which, if it were deſtitute of every other argument in its favour, has proved, in this country, politically wiſe, have adopted another mode of attack, which, though leſs obvious, promiſes, if unreſiſted, to be as effectual. It is that of corrupting, or rather deſtroying, the great doctrines of our religion. For, as our Liturgy can be maintained no longer, than the doctrines, upon which it is founded, ſo muſt the eſtabliſhment of the Church fall with the Liturgy.

Again, taken in another point of view, the corruption of the doctrines of Chriſtianity will ſpeedily have the ſame effect;

for thoſe doctrines, which the Socinians are moſt eager to explode, compriſe nearly all, that can intereſt the hopes and fears, and therefore all, which can influence the practice of a Chriſtian; an influence, which was in part only removed in the candid eſtimation of the noble hiſtorian, when it made room for the bloody and ſingular ſcene, which we this day lament. What political conſequences may follow from a more general deſtruction of all religious principle, God only knows: for the ſecret things of God belong unto the Lord our God; but thoſe things, which are revealed, whether by experience of paſt times in this kingdom, or, as they are forced upon our obſervation, in the calamities of other nations, belong unto us, and to our children, for ever, that we may do the words of this law; which indeed is the one plain inference ſuggeſted by the preſent occaſion.

For, if reaſon, and religion, the wants of nature, and the juſt exerciſe of our moral affections, render a ſtate of ſociety neceſſary to our well being; if it be the deſign of revelation to ſtrengthen every government, which provides for the happineſs of the whole, by enforcing the due means under the ſanction of divine authority; if, laſtly, a religious eſtabliſhment, raiſed on the foundation of the Apoſtles, have a peculiar force in the ſupport of a conſtitution, which we acknowledge to be the ſingular bleſſing of heaven, and with which it is now ſo intimately connected, that theory, and experience teach us, they are inſeparable, but by the ruin

of

of both; then are we bound by the ſeveral obligations of reaſon, and religion, of prudence, and virtue, by the ſpecial dictates of the Goſpel, by the pure, and primitive form of our holy Church, by the intereſt we have in the preſent, and future good order, and proſperity of our Country, ſo to manifeſt our *honour to the King*, by a zealous and conſcientious diſcharge of our duty in the relations of civil ſociety, that it may indeed appear to be founded in that firſt, and great principle, the *fear of God*, to whoſe protection we ſhall thus beſt commend all, that we hold moſt dear to ourſelves, and to our poſterity.

THE END.

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